Unlocking the Story

Of

William T. Stackpole's

Adventures Traveling to

The 1849 California Gold Rush

By

Dale C. Maley

Fairbury, Illinois

2018

Who Was William T. Stackpole?

-One of early Fairbury's most interesting characters

-During his lifetime, he was a……..

1. Gold prospector
2. Pioneer
3. Farmer
4. Merchant
5. Grain speculator
6. Oil-field worker
7. Real-estate sales person
8. Inventor
9. Writer
10. Publisher
11. Visionary

Young William Stackpole.

Discovery of the 1849 Gold Rush Diary

Book Published

Diary Book Published

Research to write new book titled ***William T. Stackpole of Fairbury, Illinois***

William T. Stackpole's 1849 Journey from Illinois to the California Gold Fields

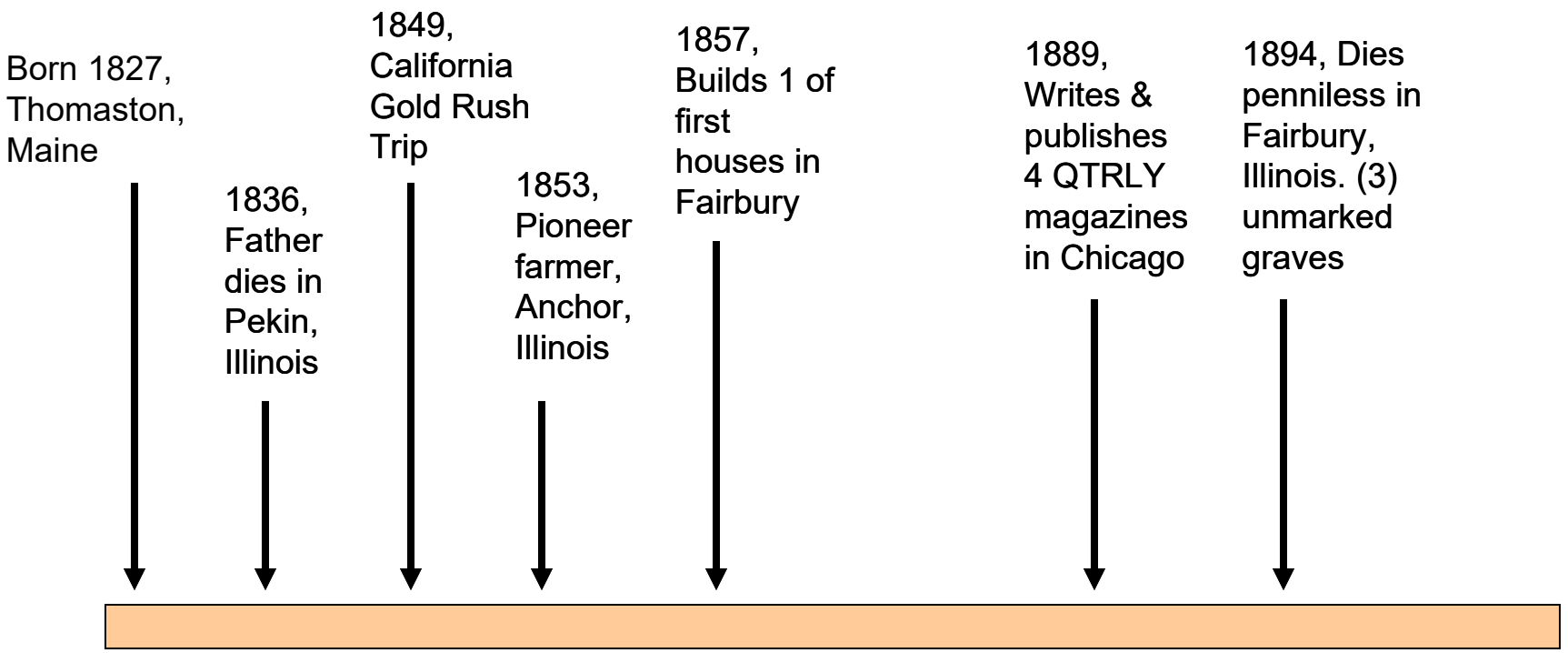
2016 | 2017 | 2018

Nov ⟷ **Jan**

- Internet search found copy of his 1849 Gold Rush diary at the Beinecke Research Library – Yale University
- Paid $20 for library to scan 160 pgs.
- Written in longhand
- Planned to transcribe at later date

- Transcribed 1 paragraph at-a-time
- 160 pages, 24,000 words
- Could not decipher some words
- Sister-in-Law Judy Wells was able to decipher most of mystery words
- Retired school teacher used to deciphering young children's handwriting ☺

William T. Stackpole Time Line


Born 1827, Thomaston, Maine
1836, Father dies in Pekin, Illinois
1849, California Gold Rush Trip
1853, Pioneer farmer, Anchor, Illinois
1857, Builds 1 of first houses in Fairbury
1889, Writes & publishes 4 QTRLY magazines in Chicago
1894, Dies penniless in Fairbury, Illinois. (3) unmarked graves

Stackpole's Party

- 24 Men from Tazewell County, Illinois
- 12 Oxen drawn wagons
- 12 Oxen minimum
- Cattle
- Horses

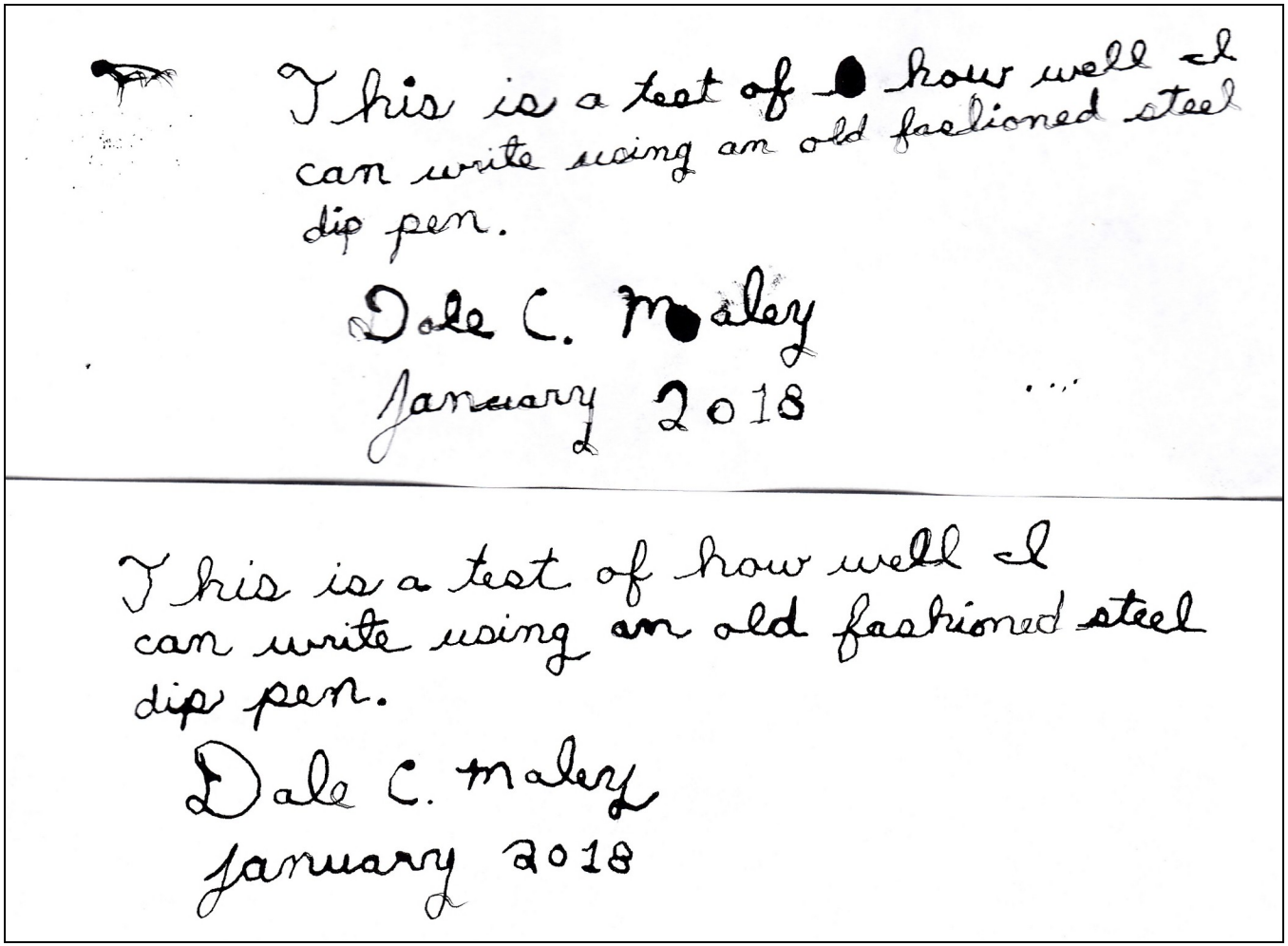
Why Oxen?
-Less picky than horses about what they eat

1849 Writing Instruments

TheFountainPenNetwork.com

- Feather quill pens require re-sharpening very often
- Steel quill dip pens were available in St. Louis before 1849

Using a Steel Quill Dip Pen


This is a test of how well I
can write using an old fashioned steel
dip pen.
Dale C. Maley
January 2018
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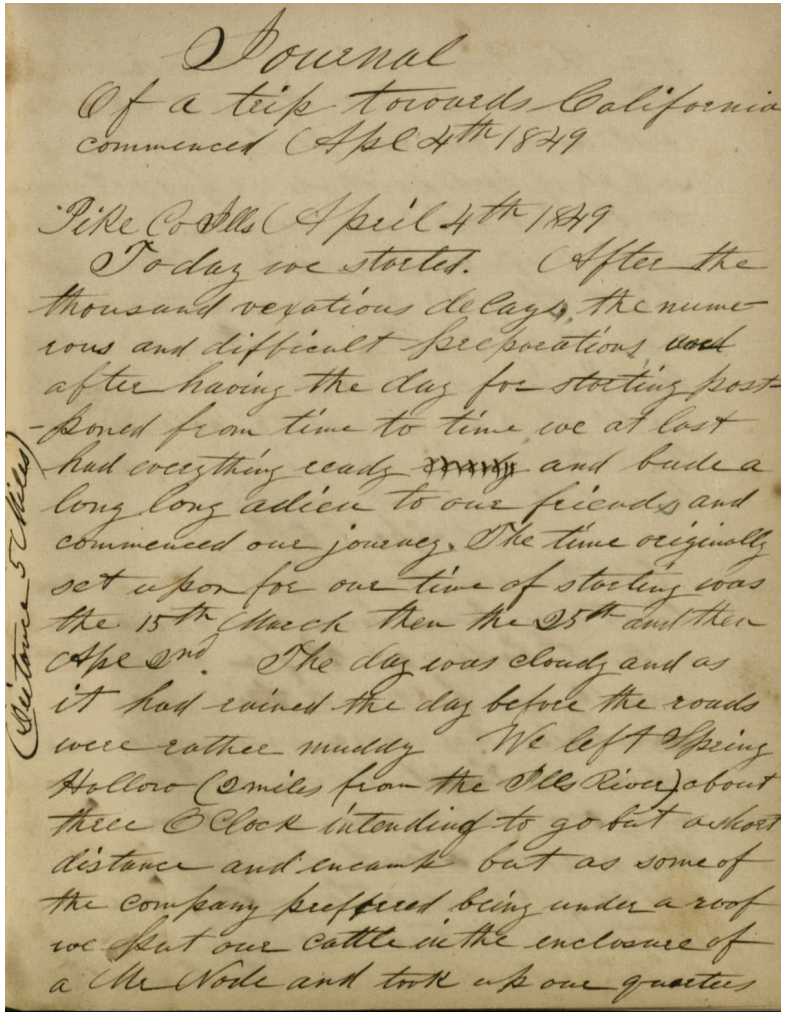
January 2018

#1

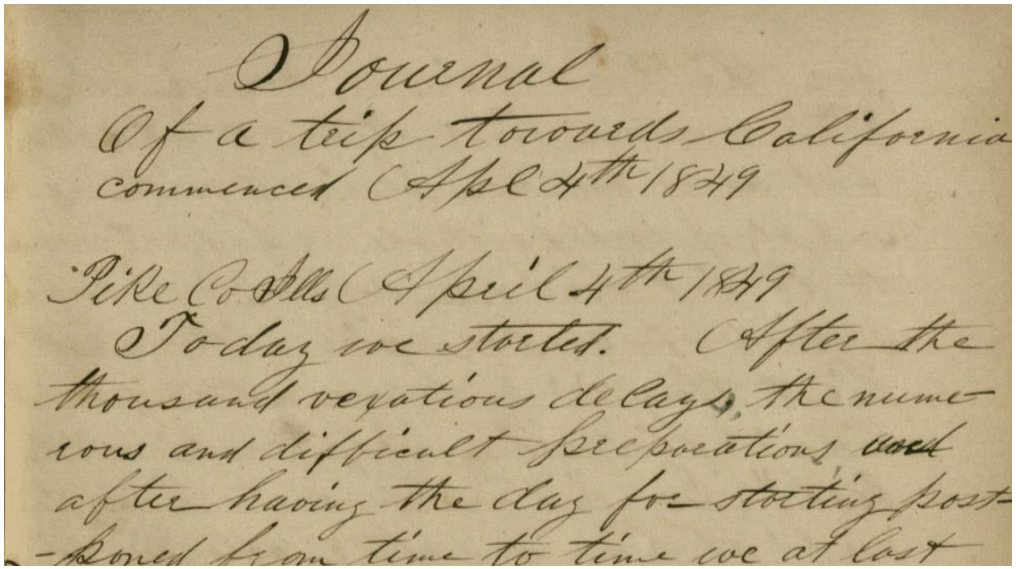
#2

The Journey Begins



Journal
Of a trip towards California
commenced April 4th 1849

Pike Co Ills April 4th 1849
To day we started. After the thousand vexations delays, the numerous and difficult preperations used after having the day for starting postponed from time to time we at last had everything ready and bade a long long adieu to our friends and commenced our journey. The time originally set upon for our time of starting was the 15th March then the 25th and then April 2nd. The day was cloudy and as it had rained the day before the roads were rather muddy We left Spring Hollow (3 miles from the Ills River) about three O'Clock intending to go but a short distance and encamp but as some of the company preferred being under a roof we put our cattle in the enclosure of a Mr Noble and took up our quarters



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The “Mesmeriser”

At the door of a little country blacksmith's shop was an individual dressed in a pair of dirty check pants a dark tweed coat and glaid cap and mounted on a brisk looking bay horse.

To give him a literary air a few red and yellow backed pamphlets protruded very conspicuously from his coat pockets. As he was haranguing those inside the shop very earnestly and as I am a close observer of curious specimens of the genus homo, I drew near to see what was going on while George was getting some work done to his waggon.

It seemed that this individual was a professor of mesmerism and was endeavoring to get scholars and was trying to induce the Blacksmith to join his class. The worthy son of Vulcan seemed to be a firm believer in the science but alleged as a reason for not joining the scarcity of friends and difficulty to get hold of the needful.

The “Mesmeriser”

The mesmeriser told us that he too was going to California but that he should not start for two or three weeks, as he had such a press of business that he had two or three subjects upon whom he had just commenced and of whom he wished to make clairvoyants that he had one clairvoyant on his hands now who had revealed to him all about the gold region of California, had told him that all who went with a determination to do good with their money, if they had made it would succeed, that he would be successful beyond his utmost expectations.

After some delay we left this disciple of Mesmers and about dark arrived in Pittsfield.

The “Mesmeriser”

From Wikipedia:

Animal magnetism, also known as **mesmerism**, was the name given by the German doctor Franz Mesmer in the 18th century to what he believed to be an invisible natural force (*lebensmagnetismus*) possessed by all living/animate beings (humans, animals, vegetables, etc.). He believed that the force could have physical effects, including healing. He tried persistently but without success to achieve scientific recognition of his ideas.

The vitalist theory attracted numerous followers in Europe and the United States and was popular into the 19th century. Practitioners were often known as **magnetizers**, rather than **mesmerists**. For about 75 years from its beginnings in 1779 it was an important specialty in medicine, and continued to have some influence for about another 50 years. Hundreds of books were written on the subject between 1766 and 1925. Today it is almost entirely forgotten.

Gallatin, Missouri

"This afternoon we passed through the little village of Gallatin. Near here was the scene of a bloody fight between the Mormons and the people of the country during the time of the Mormon difficulties in Missouri. We were told by some of the settlers here that there was a well forty feet deep nearby filled with the c bodies of the Mormons after the feud."

From Wikipedia:

Gallatin was founded in 1837 and named for Albert Gallatin, America's longest-serving Secretary of the Treasury (1801–1814). Gallatin was incorporated in 1857.

The Gallatin Election Day Battle took place on 6 August 1838, when about 200 people attempted to forcibly prevent Latter-day Saints (Also known as Mormons) from voting in the newly created county's first election. In October 1838, David W. Patten lead Mormon troops in the Daviess County expedition, where the Mormons burned and looted much of Gallatin, Millport and Grindstone Fork, consecrating the stolen goods to the Bishop's storehouse.

These skirmishes were part of the 1838 Mormon War. Gallatin is important in the Latter-day Saint religion; nearby is a place known to them as Adam-ondi-Ahman, believed to be the site where Adam and Eve lived after being expelled from the Garden of Eden.

1,000 Wagons at St. Joseph

Cholera

We yoked up at sunrise and drove down to the ferry to wait for our turn to cross the River. Today a man fell down in the street with an attack of Cholera and in a few hours was a corpse. Nearly every boat that arrives from St. Louis has more or less deaths on board from this terrible disease and frequently within 3 or 4 hours of the first attacks.

Last week a man died at a tent above town and the men with him merely wrapped his corpse in a blanket and consigned it to its mother earth upon the spot. This is a fact.

What is Cholera?

From Wikipedia:

Cholera is an infection of the small intestine by some strains of the bacterium Vibrio cholera. Symptoms may range from none, to mild, to severe. The classic symptom is large amounts of watery diarrhea that lasts a few days. Vomiting and muscle cramps may also occur. Diarrhea can be so severe that it leads within hours to severe dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. This may result in sunken eyes, cold skin, decreased skin elasticity, and wrinkling of the hands and feet. Dehydration can cause the skin to turn bluish.

Symptoms start two hours to five days after exposure.

Cholera is caused by a number of types of Vibrio cholera, with some types producing more severe disease than others. It is spread mostly by unsafe water and unsafe food that has been contaminated with human feces containing the bacteria.

Rough Characters

Today two brothers (emigrants) went out to cut whip stocks about a mile above town. Here they separated in the bushes and one soon after returned to town when he went to sleep. Upon awakening an hour or two after and finding that his brother had not returned, he became alarmed and went in search of him when horrible to relate he found him almost in a dying condition and soetering in gace. He had been set upon by some desperado, stabbed, and robbed of about $50. It is thought that he will recover and as he described the robber he may perhaps be brought to justice.

The Poet

Rest in peace thou lonely stranger
Far from home and kindred laid
Midst the quiet wilds of nature
Thy last earthly home is made.

Here thy golden hopes are brightest
All thy labors here are done
Here life's weary load is lighted
Here ends thy journey to the setting sun

That dreadful scourge that souls that walks abroad
Amid the busy haunts of men
Even in this dark secluded wood
Has found thee and marked thee for its own

Ne'er shall friends and kindred greet thee
From thy long long absence home
Ne'er shall thy sister's arms enclose thee
Or mother's voice in loving welcome come

Above thy head the tall trees wave
And the wild birds around thee sing
Thousands will heedless pass they grave
With noise of rolling wheels oft will the forest ring

Rest in peace thou lonely stranger
Far from home and kindred laid
Amidst these mournful wilds of nature
Thy last earthly home is made

Buffalo

- In 1849, they did not see many Buffalo.
- Some of Stackpole's men chased and shot a few of them
- But one man got so excited he shot his own horse in the neck
  -Killed the horse and almost killed the rider!
- Did see one Sioux camp where Buffalo hides used as walls for their hut

Castle Rock

Castle Rock
NEBRASKA
Omaha
Lincoln
IOWA
Des Moines
Cedar Rapids
Iowa City
Rockford
Fort Collins
Denver
United States
LORADO
284 h
868 miles
Kansas City
Columbia
Pekin
ILLINOIS
Hannibal

Courthouse Rock - 4,105 feet

Jail Rock - 3,975 feet

Chimney Rock

Fort Laramie

Our stay at the Fort was short (about an hour) as we had nothing to detain Immediately beyond the fort is a burying place where there are several graves most of them with small wooden enclosures around them but no inscription (with a single exception) to tell their names or when they died.

There was a rude vault or tomb built of "dobes" upon which were several skulls and human bones. Strange as it may seem these human skulls were covered with names of those who had passed along the road.

Some men seem to have a passion for leaving their names where they can be seen and I have seen them on nearly every suitable or unsuitable place from a schoolhouse bench to a church door but never before on human skulls.

The Journey

WYOMING
Casper
RESERVATION
Fort Laramie National Historical Site
Castle Rock
NEBRASKA
Sioux City
IOWA
Des Moines
Cedar Rapids
Iowa City
Madison
Rockford
306 h
937 miles
Fort Collins
Denver
United States
COLORADO
Colorado
Saint Joseph
Kansas City
Lawrence
Columbia
Hannibal
Pekin
ILLINOIS
St. Louis

Independence Rock

Devil's Gate

Ice Slough

Saw snow in different places. Roads sandy and dust unbearable. At 4 PM reached Ice Spring which as I am Slick would say "beats all nature". Whey there has never been an account of this natural Ice house published I cannot imagine if there has I have not seen it. A hollow between two low ranges of hills extends along for some 2 or 3 miles. In this slough of soft spongy sod which at the depth of one or 2 feet below the surface is one cake of clear cold bona fide Ice several inches in thickness.

The boys were prying it out with poles when we came up and we took some on to camp in honor of the occasion made an ice punch.

Ice Slough

Other traveler's also found the Ice Slough:

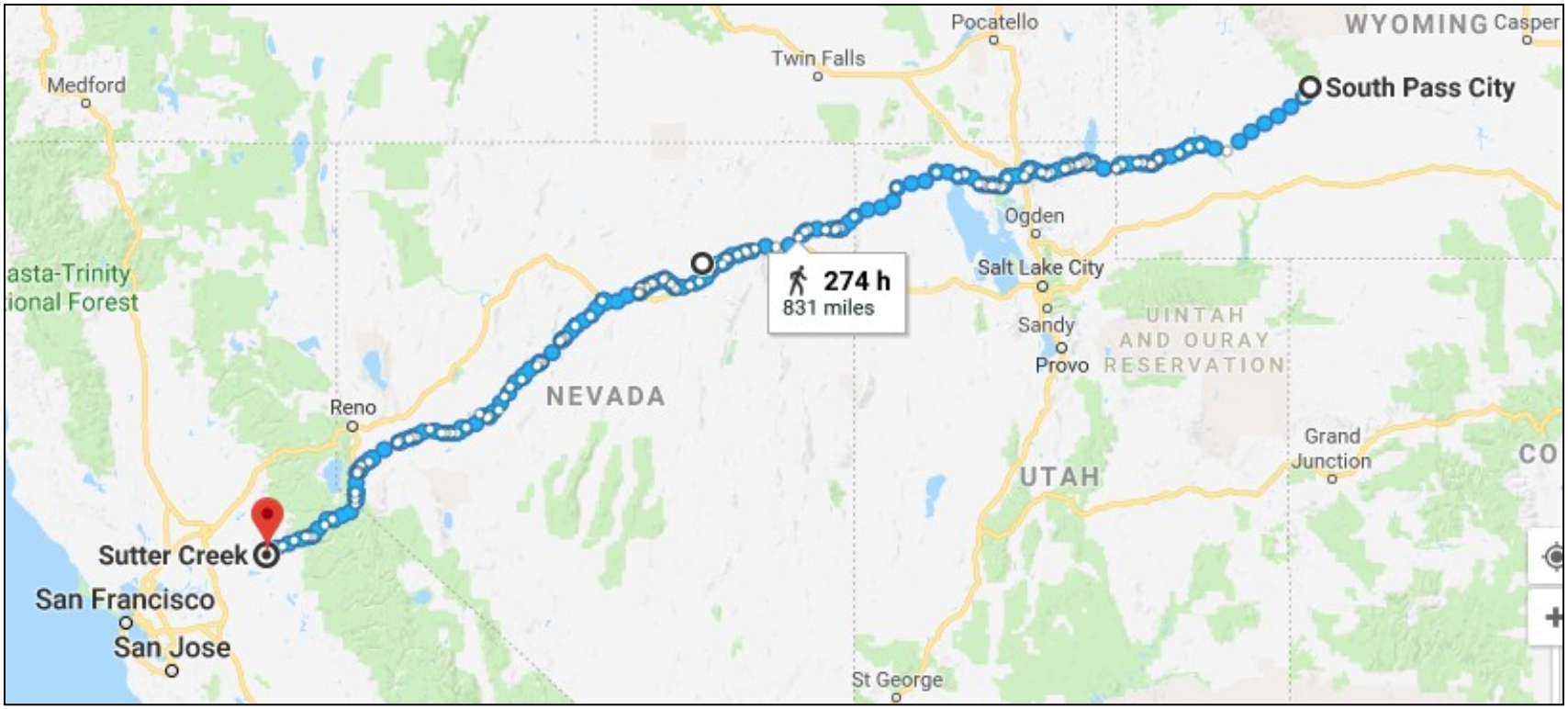
The slough provided in the heat of summer unusual refreshment. In his notes J. Goldsborough Bruff wrote,
"...by digging a couple of feet, ice is obtained. The surface is dug up all around by travelers - as much from curiosity as to obtain so desirable a luxury in a march so dry and thirsty...."

Indeed, the Belshaw party from Lake County, Indiana, paused at the Slough on July 4, 1853. Capt. George Belshaw noted in his diary that lemonade was made with the ice, "It relished first rate."
In the Slough, peat built up over the tundra-like sub-surface, insulating the frozen water below from the summer heat. Today the slough is a broad green swale leading north toward the Sweetwater. Because of changes to the drainage wrought by irrigation, the sub-surface ice no longer forms.

The Journey

IDAHO
YOMING
South Pass City
Castle Rock
IOWA
Chicago
Peoria
NEVADA
UTAH
COLORADO
395 h
1,204 miles
Hannibal
KANSAS
MISSOURI

End of Diary Part 1



- Still 831 miles to go, but Diary ends.
- He ran out of ink??????

Diary Resumes

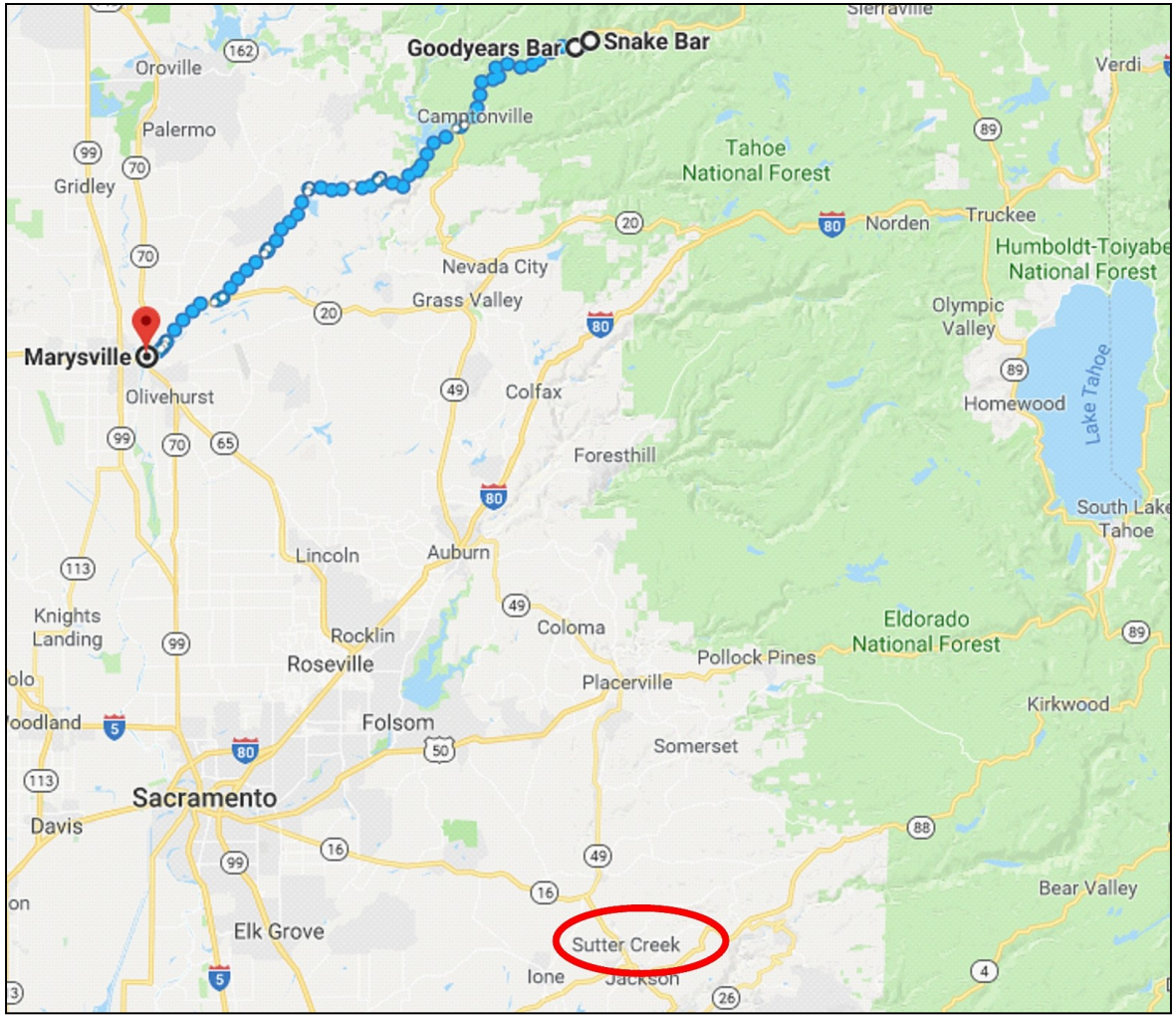
Memoranda

On Thursday Nov 1st, 1850, I was taken sick and on the Monday or Tuesday following (Nov 5th) in company with William Sterling and William J. Tapping, left our shanty on Snake Bar on the North Yuba and started for home. The next morning at Goodyear's Bar,

Sterling and myself being unable to walk succeeded in getting mules to ride to Marysville at 20$ each and Tapping walked.

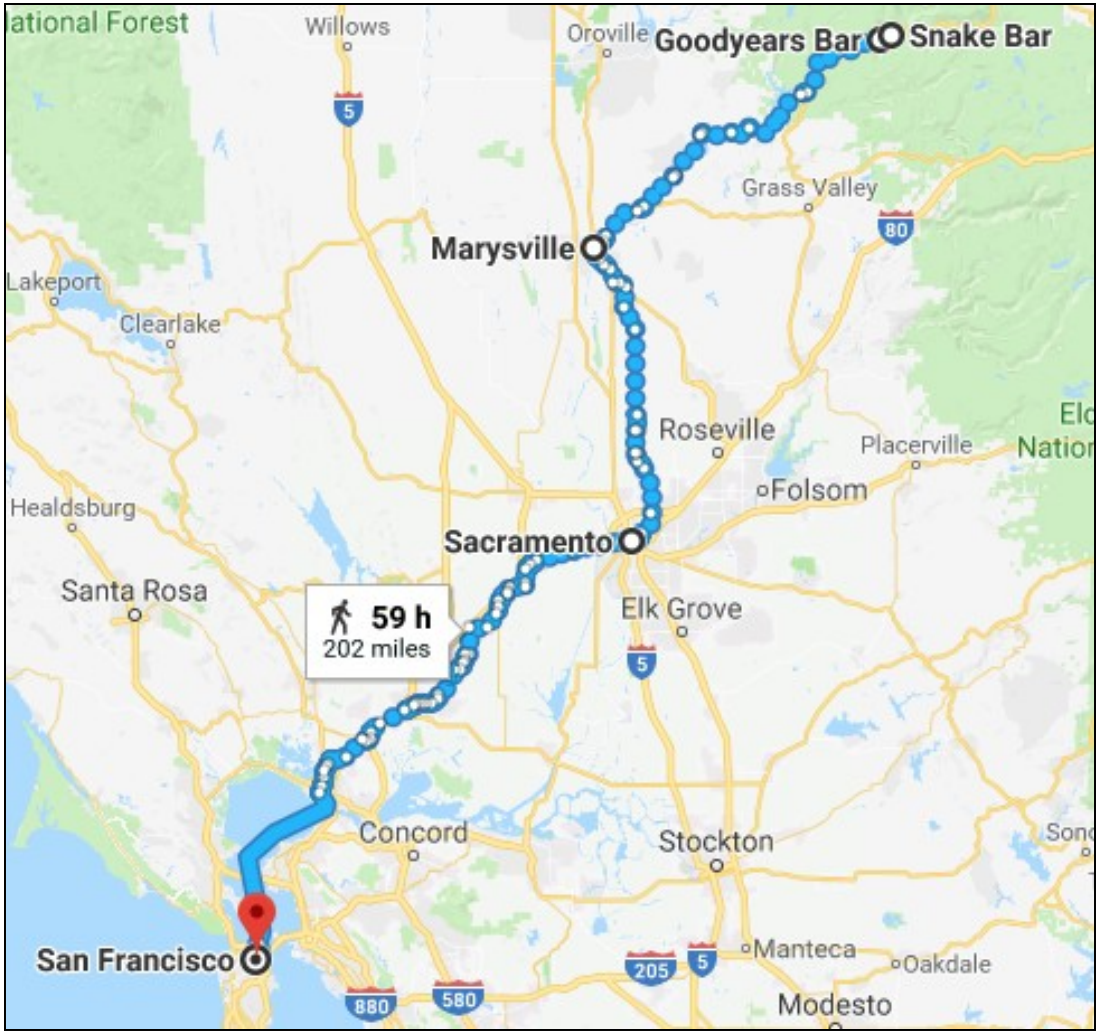
In three days we reached Marysville where we took the stage for Sacramento City and from there took the Steamer for San Francisco, which place we reached on the 10th Nov.

40 Miles North of Sutter's Creek



Sutter's Creek was initial gold discovery.

202 Miles from San Francisco



1st Friend Dies

Nov 11th

William Sterling died on board ship Hercules San Francisco.

Nov 12th

William Tapping was taken sick.

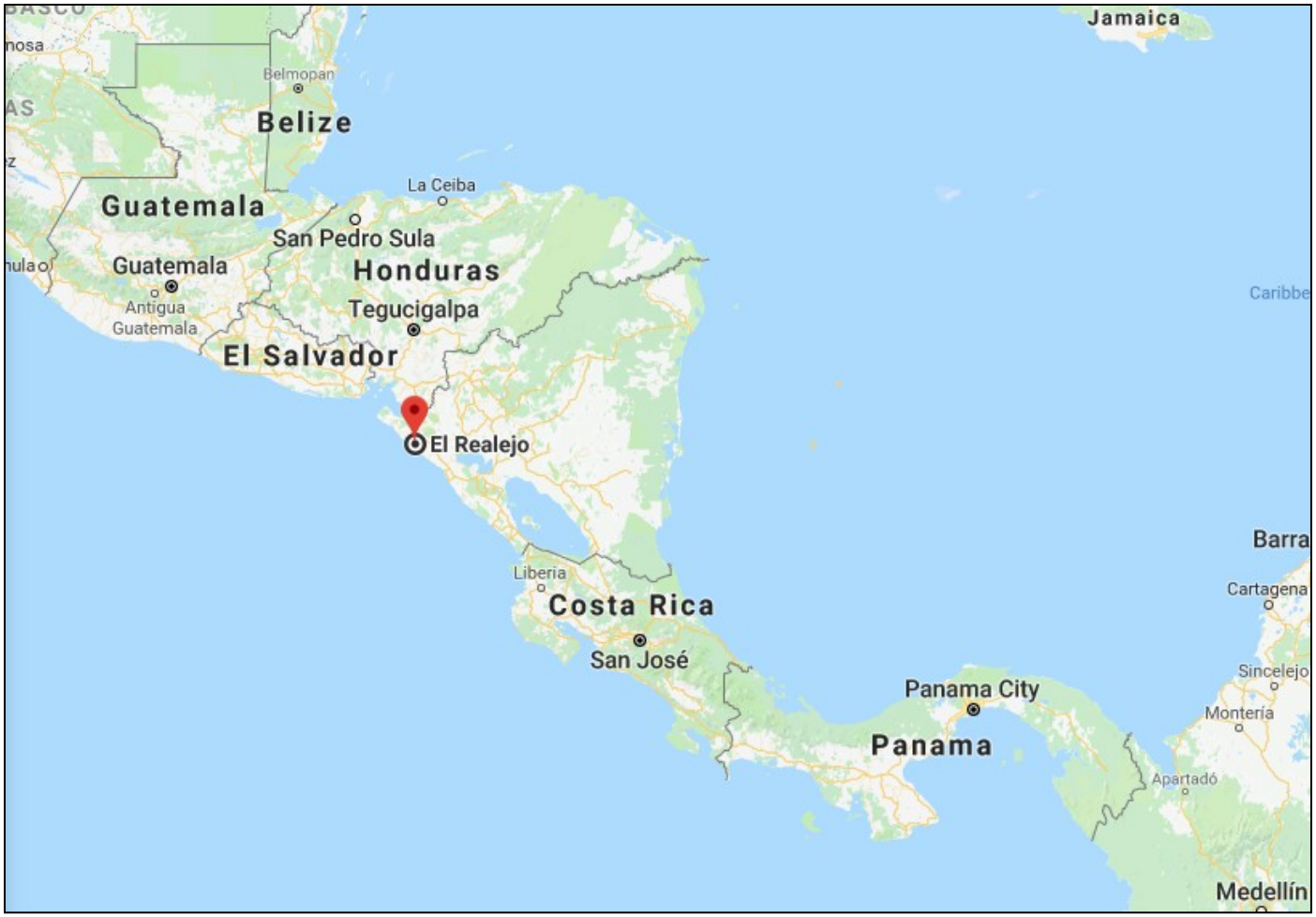
Nov 27th

Ship Dumbarton sailed for Realejo and Panama

By Ship

Google Maps will not show a water voyage.

Panama Canal Opened in 1914



More Sad News

Dec 6th
William Tapping died.

Inventory of the effects of William T. Tapping entrusted by him to my care to be delivered to his father in Peoria Co., Illinois.

73	Ounces of gold dust	
	This amount cash	$8510
1	Box coat	
1	Wool hat	
1	Pair shoes	
1	Pair suspenders	
1	Small box cheese	
1	Box preserved ginger	
2	Shirts	
1	Allen's revolver	
2	Papers smoking tobacco	
12	Small plugs	
1	Knife and belt	
1	Silk handkerchief	
1	Pair socks	

Chris Lilly

Two or more vessels have been lost on the **illegible**, but we learned that it was through the carelessness of the officers and crew. Chris Lilly, the celebrated NY prize fighter piloted us in and at 12 o'clock we cast anchor about six miles from the town. A number of native boats were soon alongside with sugar, oranges, bananas, and to sell and after a voyage at sea any kind of fruit comes very acceptable.

Who was Chris Lilly??????

Chris Lilly

Wikipedia:

-Christopher Lilly was involved in a notorious **120** round prize-fight with Thomas McCoy in 1842.

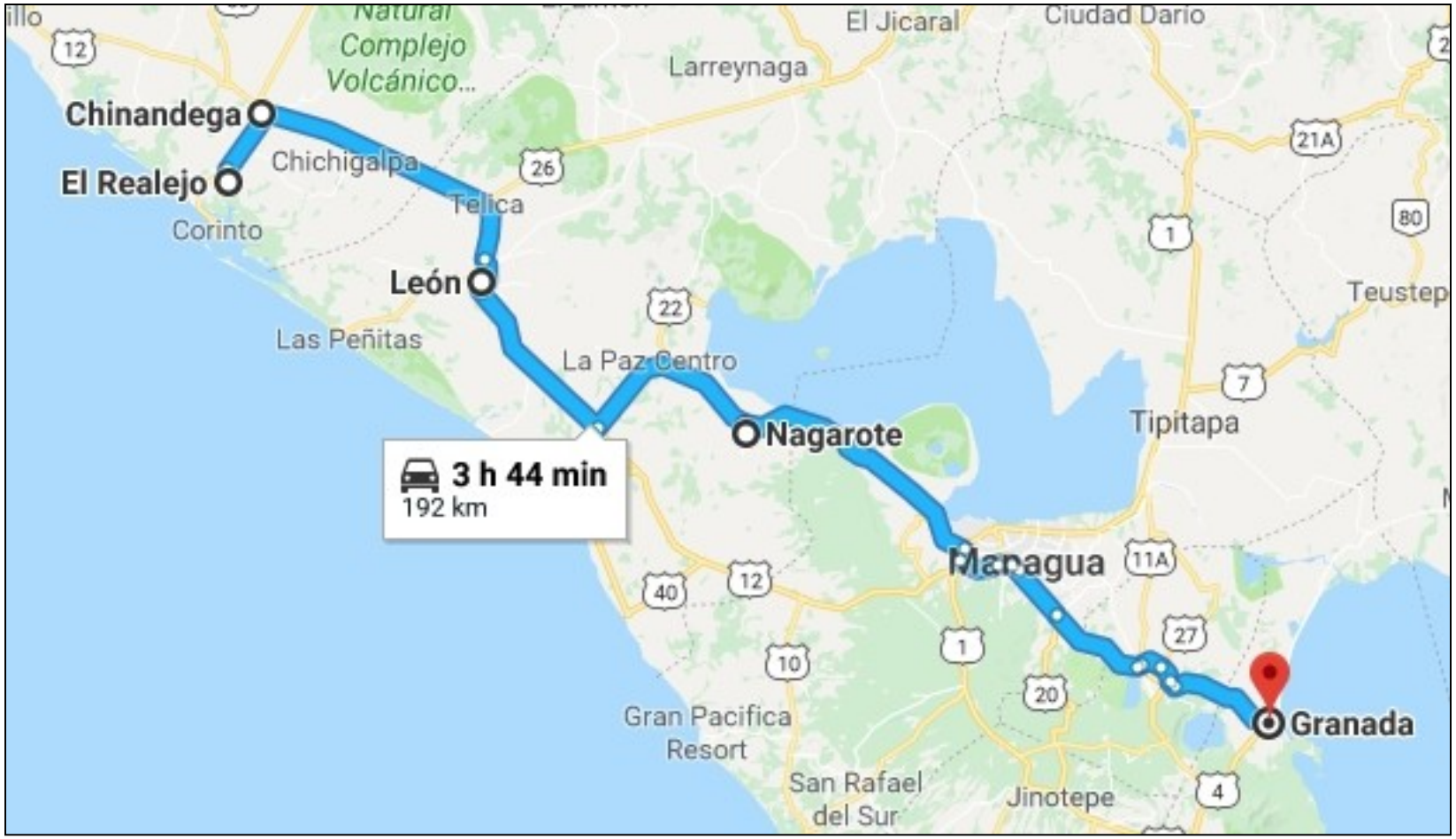
-After 120 rounds, fighter Thomas McCoy died in the ring.

-Chris Lilly was indicted and found guilty of manslaughter.

-This story made national news

-Stackpole must have known about the famous fighter.

Another Journey



The End

This afternoon a turn in the road brought us all at once upon the shores of Lake Leon. This is a beautiful sheet of water and is connected with Lake Nicaragua by a small stream. Its size I was unable to learn but it must be as much as 30 miles in length and from 7 to 15 in width.

Our road now lay along the beach of the lake while upon our right was a high wall of cliffs covered with trees and shrubs. A lofty volcano rises to the height of several thousand feet immediately opposite and from its summit a thin column of smoke is rising. Although when on the Pacific before reaching Realejo, we thought we saw smoke issuing from the summits of the mountains several times.

I have now **illegible** seen that I could be perfectly sure was a "bona fide" volcano. About 4 PM we reached the interesting little town of Mateare on the lake and put up for the night.

Last Diary Entry

The End

- This is the last diary entry that Stackpole makes regarding his overland trip in Guatemala.

- It is assumed he took a boat across the large lake, then walked to a port city on the Pacific Ocean.

- Then he probably took a sailing ship to New Orleans, up the Mississippi, back to the Peoria area.

Diary Net Worth Statement

•His calculations show he had $1630 in early 1851. This would be about $50,000 in 2017 dollars.

•Stackpole was one of the few miners to actually strike it rich in the 1849 Gold Rush.

Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars

•Alma Lewis James reported that Stackpole sent another $48,000 home to his lawyer

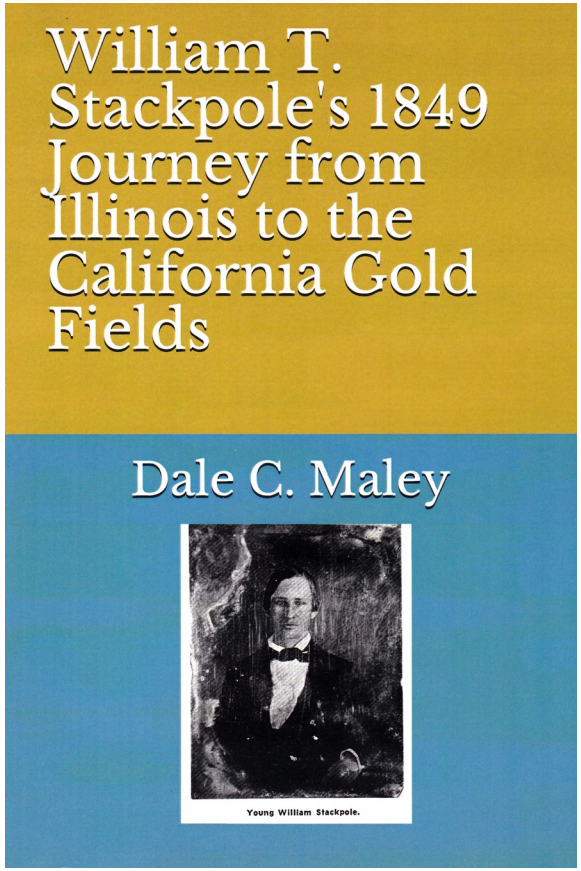
•She also reorted in her first edition that Stackpole invested his money in businesses, orchards, coal mines, and farm land in Anchor, Illinois.

• Then was a general economic downturn in the country and he lost it all. At this point, he moved to Fairbury, Illinois in 1857, when the city was founded.

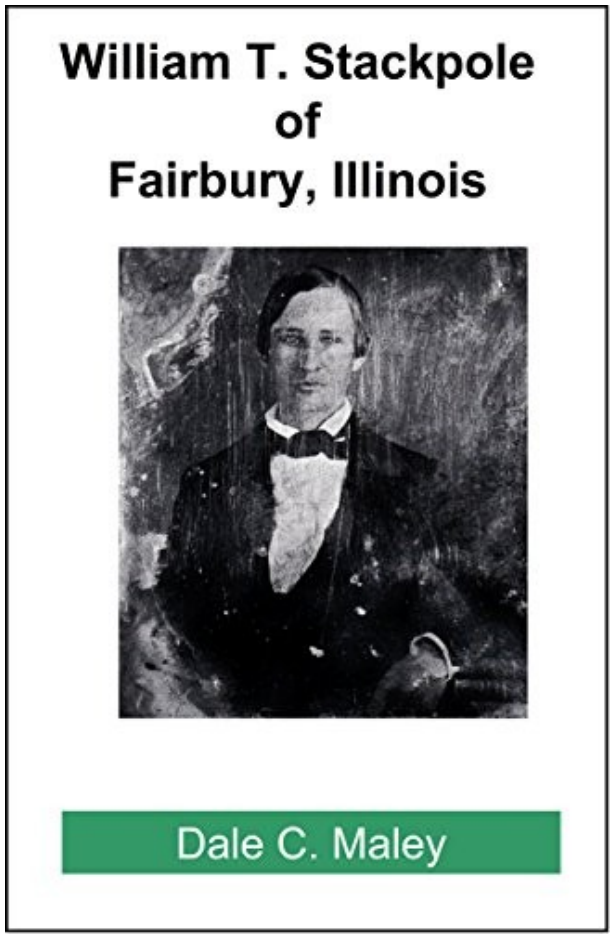
•He lived the rest of his life in Fairbury until his death in 1894.

•Stackpole went on to make and lose 2 more fortunes during his lifetime. He ended up dying penniless. Stackpole, his wife, and his daughter are buried in unmarked graves in Fairbury's Graceland Cemetery.

Books – Amazon.com



Printed Book



Kindle e-book

The End

Questions?